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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4845
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1313
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1149
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0641
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1054

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 002337

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR
S/CRS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KHIV](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: WYCLEF IN CONCERT: PROMOTING HAITI'S FUTURE

¶1. Wyclef Jean, Haiti's most prominent celebrity and public figure, held a free concert for more than 20,000 people December 1 in Jacmel, a southern coastal city about 3 hours from Port-au-Prince. The crowd, hemmed in between the beach on one side and a concrete wall on the other, extended for miles along Jacmel Bay. They arrived long before the concert and stood shoulder-to-shoulder for hours. Jean finally appeared on stage at 2330, riding a horse and accompanied by a man dressed as Jean Jacques Dessalines, Haiti's founding father. During the four hour concert, he spent most of his time speaking to the crowd, sending anti-kidnapping messages and reminders that Haitians alone are responsible for the state of their country, including the violence and trash in the streets. His musical performance was limited to a few songs, one with a well-known Haitian singer and another with street kids from the Port-au-Prince slum Belair, who learned to rap as part of Jean's outreach in Haiti's slums. The concert concluded the Jacmel Film Festival organized by Yele Haiti, Jean's non-profit organization which promotes the arts as a vehicle for change.

¶2. Also in Jacmel, Wyclef attended a town hall discussion on World AIDS Day. He advocated for safe sex, frequent HIV tests and awareness about the disease. "How many people in this audience do not have HIV/AIDS?" he asked, and when all hands went up, he further inquired, "How many of you have been tested in the last two months?" When all hands went down, his point was clear that most people in the room could not be certain. He also explained to the audience the reason he brought a film festival and a concert to Jacmel, instead of other much-needed basic services: he believes that the arts can make a positive difference in the lives of the Haitians, most of whom do not have access to such entertainment.

¶3. Jean, a Haitian citizen resident in New York, describes Yele Haiti as a movement to empower the people of Haiti and the diaspora to help make the country a better place. In addition to his other programs in Haiti like street cleaning, distributing food and promoting education for all, Jean announced a new initiative, in partnership with Canada, to promote artisan handicrafts in Jacmel. He also intends to build a resort on Haiti's northern island, Ile de la Tortue.

¶4. Comment: Jean elicits uncontrollable excitement, incomparable to any other public figure, from Haitians both for his rise to stardom from a poor neighborhood outside of Port-au-Prince and for the positive international attention

he brings to Haiti. Upon arriving several hours late in Jacmel, Jean -- who was earlier the guest of honor at a dinner hosted by President Preval -- was met by thousands of jubilant Haitians, who ran through the streets chasing his motorbike, celebrating the home-coming of their star.

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